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CIRCULAR.

Marshall, Texas, 20th August, 1863.

SIR:—

At the recent conference, at this place, between the Lieutenant-General commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, and the Governors and other officials of the States comprised in it, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved: That to harmonize, and infuse vigor into, the patriotic efforts of the people, diffuse correct information, and discourage disloyalty, an organization should be instituted, as follows:

"The Governors, for the time being, of the Trans-Mississippi Department should, unofficially, compose a Committee of Public Safety, with a Chairman to call it together, when necessary, and act as its agent, and should provide for Committees of Correspondence in each county and parish, to correspond with the Governor of their State, and with the Committee.

"The people of each county and parish should form a voluntary Confederate Association, to cooperate with the Trans-Mississippi Committee of Public Safety, and the corresponding committees."

The Committee of Public Safety having been immediately organized, as recommended in that resolution, the undersigned was chosen its Chairman.

The conference unanimously took a cheerful and hopeful view of the condition of our affairs. A free interchange of opinions and information disclosed many preparations and resources which the wise secrecy characteristic of our military leaders has kept, and must continue to keep, from the knowledge of the public. The Confederate and State governments have directed their efforts, with considerable success, towards enabling this department to meet its own military wants. Letters from the President and Secretary of War, written since their knowledge of the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, show that constant and strenuous efforts will continue to be made by the Confederate authorities to extend us liberal and effective aid.

The loss of our Mississippi strong-holds was followed by unwarrantable apprehensions in some portions of this department. The comparison of intelligence from all quarters shows that our population is still not only true but confident of final success. Those apprehensions arose mainly from ignorance of our own resources, an impression that we might be deprived of the aid of the Confederate government, want of correct intelligence of passing events, difficulty of communication between the inhabitants of our sparsely settled country, but above all else, from the absence of concert of action among zealous patriots and the seemingly systematic diffusion of false and discouraging rumors by the public enemy and the few traitors whom the generous liberalism of our institutions permits to continue unchecked within our borders.

The opinion exists among a few, (but more fixedly in the other section of our Confederacy than in our own,) and is sedulously propagated by the enemy, that a feeling is spreading in this department in favor of separation from our eastern sisters, and even the erection of a Mississippi Valley Republic. Investigation has shown this opinion to be unfounded, no individual who avows a preference for any such project can be discovered.—Occasionally, some person suspects some other of favoring it; invariably, that other denies the charge. Such an origin of a false alarm is familiar in the history of the strategic art of military lying. The few disaffected in our land who desire a reconstruction of Federal tyranny over us, industriously spread rumors of such plans, in the hope thereby to distract and dishearten us. But the innate silliness of dividing the South in the face of an enemy who boasts that he can subdue us though united, will banish every such scheme from the minds of patriots.

Besides these imaginary apprehensions there are other and real, hindrances to a united, vigorous and enthusiastic prosecution of the war. The soldier who imperils his life in battle, cannot feel content that so many should shirk their duty in absences without leave, or evade the utmost vigilance of the conscription officers. The citizen who liberally supplies our army at moderate rates is disgusted at the sight of men devising schemes to avoid their due shares of the public burthens, or to increase their wealth by speculating on the necessities of the government or of individuals. The sternest regulations fail to prevent occasional insolence or tyranny by officials, or inexcusable violations of private rights by thoughtless or insubordinate stragglers. These evils it is difficult entirely to prevent in time of war; but to the extent to which they exist, they tend to diminish the zeal of our people in defence of their independence.

Our newspapers have unavoidably become few and of diminished dimensions; prudence also enjoins on them silence in regard to many matters.—Communication by mail is difficult. Thus deprived of much of the light which, in time of peace, enterprising public journals and private correspondence can throw on the condition, resources and wants of every locality, the civil and military authorities frequently fail to obtain that minute and regular

information which would enable them to act promptly with a thorough knowledge both of the temper of the public mind, and of the means at their disposal to conduct the war. The impaired efficiency and activity of the usual police authorities is, in some districts, inadequate to the task of keeping a proper watch upon the elements of disorder which abound in every country in time of war, and which must also exist in ours.

The remedy for the ailments thus debilitating the body politic is VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION of the people, *not* to do anything whatever above or against the Law, but to aid and sustain, by lawful means, legally constituted authorities in the performance of their arduous duties. Already, in several portions of this department this idea has germinated in the minds of ardent patriots. The design of the Marshall conference is simply to accelerate, and give the sanction of the regular constitutional authorities to, a movement which promised speedily to become general and spontaneous among the people.

The name "Confederate Association" has been adopted as indicative of the purpose of the organization to sustain the cause of the Confederate States. As it is designed to embrace *all* citizens true to the cause, a formula of membership has been suggested which is believed to be comprehensive yet unexceptionable. The purposes and organization of the Association being divested of all secrecy, and membership being wholly voluntary, no reasonable objection can be made to it. A candid explanation of its nature and objects will, it is confidently expected, make it generally acceptable, and the wider the extension of it, the greater will be the security for a discreet management of its affairs. The formula of membership is appended to this circular; when any member is prevented from affixing his signature in person, the list should show the individual by whom the signature is written; the postoffice of each member should be stated to facilitate the distribution of documents by the Association and the Committee of Public Safety.

The details of organization of each Association are left to the discretion of its members; a president and secretary are, of course, indispensable. It may be divided into precinct associations, where practicable. To facilitate its extension no general contribution should be expected from members, but the few expenses necessary should be paid by the liberality of the wealthy. As soon as a considerable proportion of the citizens present in a county or parish shall have joined the Association, it should be organized. It should also select two or three of its most active members, men of sound judgment and having the confidence of their community, as members of a Committee of Correspondence; these, with such others as the Governor of their State may, if he deem it advisable, add to their number, will compose that Committee. The names and postoffice addresses of the officers of the Association, and the members of its Committee of Correspondence, should be immediately communicated to the Governor of their State, and also to the Chairman of the Committee of Public Safety.

Every Confederate Association is expected to exert itself in keeping alive the fervid patriotism of the people by meetings at suitable times, frequent informal gatherings, and occasional public speeches. Its officers should pay special attention to the dissemination of accurate intelligence of current events; one of the main duties of the Committee of Public Safety will be to initiate measures for promptly furnishing these officers with such intelligence. They should also endeavor to correct, and prevent the diffusion of, exaggerated or false reports coming from the enemy's lines or originating with his spies and secret agents among us. To these ends they should aid in extending the circulation of reliable newspapers thoroughly devoted to our cause, and counteract the baleful influence of those in which are to be found the croakings or evil suggestions which alarm timid hearts. Where the conduct of a suspected spy or secret agent of the enemy is such that the law can reach him, the Association or its officers should collect the evidences of such conduct, and promptly communicate them to the proper civil or military authorities. Each member should consider it his special duty to be vigilant in discovering the discontented or wavering, and in persuading them into a just appreciation of their duties as citizens; in visiting soldiers who are absent without leave and persons who avoid conscription, and in urging them to hasten to their camps. Where reasoning fails, the men thus neglecting their military obligations should be reported to the proper officer.

The Association can be of great use in giving to quartermasters and other government officials, and their agents, accurate intelligence concerning the resources of its neighborhood. Especially when impressments are necessary, it may by timely communication with the officer enable him to make them in the manner least inconvenient to the people, avoid throwing the whole burthen on liberal men, and prevent the cunning or sordid from escaping their just share of it. Where a charge of fraud, peculation, abuse of authority, insolence, incompetency, or neglect of duty, can be clearly established against any official or employee of the government, the Associa-

tion should collect the evidence and make the charge before the proper authority, military or civil. By thus aiding good officers, and reporting the worthless or evil disposed, the Association can powerfully contribute towards diminishing the expenses of the war, and weeding out inefficiency, the great curse of our military establishment.

This organization might thus become, in the true sense of the word and without conflict with the law, a Committee of Vigilance to watch over the public safety. No false sense of delicacy should, in this time of peril, hinder any one from aiding the public authorities by giving them the full intelligence without which they might be unable to execute the laws rigidly and impartially.

In the counties and parishes exposed to incursions or occupation by the enemy the Association might assume the duty of acting with the authorities in preventing false alarms, obtaining and circulating correct information, organizing for local defence, and in giving order and security to the removal of families and property out of reach of the enemy.

No Association should permit its organization to become languid although it may for a long time find very little to do. It cannot know at what moment it may be called on to exert its utmost energies; let it be always ready to answer the call. The system is designed to continue throughout the war; a main object of it is to organize thoroughly *in advance* of any emergency, for when the emergency comes, there may be no time to organize. It is no untried plan, but is borrowed from the system of local organization which carried our forefathers successfully through the first years of the revolution of 1776. Had we had such an organization in the parts of the Confederacy which have been overrun by the enemy, their fate might have been far different from what it is. Let us take warning from their calamities.

The duties of each Committee of Correspondence will be few but very important. It should keep itself informed of the condition of its county or parish, and by *concise* and *accurate* letters maintain a regular but not burthen-some correspondence with the Governor of its State. A similar correspondence, on matters of general interest to the department, should be kept up with the Chairman of the Committee of Public Safety, who will remain, as far as his official duties will permit, near the general commanding this department. Letters to him can be addressed to the departmental headquarters. Such correspondence, conducted with dispatch and conscientiousness, may furnish a most valuable fund of information to our civil and military authorities.

This circular will be forwarded to a few citizens, indicated by the Governor of the State, in each locality, as a call on them to proceed immediately to the organization of a "Confederate Association." You are among the citizens so selected and it is hoped that you will undertake that labor, calling your patriotic neighbors to your aid. You and they, by completing that organization will establish a just claim to the grateful remembrance of all true hearted Confederates.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Thos. C. Reynolds

Chairman, Trans-Mississippi Committee of Public Safety

To

CONFEDERATE ASSOCIATION

Of

County, State of

WE the undersigned, have become Members of the *CONFEDERATE ASSOCIATION* of _____
_____ County, State of _____, and solemnly pledge ourselves to each other and to our country, that we will support and defend, to the utmost of our ability, the independence of said State and the Confederate States of America.

SIGNATURE:

POST-OFFICE:

DATE OF SIGNATURE:

